

## **SUMMARY: Delta Stewardship Council Notice of Preparation (NOP)**

The Delta Stewardship Council has issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) for a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Delta Plan (Plan). The purpose of the Plan is to meet the coequal goals (a reliable source of water for California and maintaining, protecting, and enhancing the Delta ecosystem, in a manner consistent with the Delta as an evolving place) and all inherent sub-goals and policies objectives identified in Water Code section 85054. The NOP describes the purpose of the NOP, background of the Plan, the need for the project, project objectives, environmental baselines, potential alternatives, potential environmental effects, and the project scoping process.

### **Purpose of the NOP**

The NOP has been prepared to satisfy the requirements of CEQA to notify the public, Responsible Agencies, Trustee Agencies, the state Office of Planning and Research, the involved federal agencies, and Tribes that the DSC intends to prepare an EIR for the project and to solicit guidance from the public and those agencies as to the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the Plan EIR.

### **The Background and Need for the Plan**

During the Delta Vision process to develop a "durable vision for sustainable management of the Delta", the Executive Order presented a summary of the concerns for the continued viability of the Delta which lead to the Legislature to adopt SB 7X -1 (Act). The Act identified that the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta watershed and California's water infrastructures are in crisis and existing Delta policies are not sustainable. The Act requires the development of a new long-term strategic vision for managing the Delta. It states the need for the sustainable management of the Delta ecosystem, to provide for a more reliable water supply for the state, and to protect and enhance the quality of water supply from the Delta. It also established a governance structure that will direct efforts across state agencies to develop a legally enforceable Delta Plan.

### **Project Objectives**

The purpose of the Plan will be to meet the coequal goals and all of the sub-goals and policy objectives defined by statute. The Plan will define a legally enforceable set of policies, strategies, and actions that will serve as a basis for future findings of consistency by state and local agencies with regard to projects related to the Delta. The Plan objectives include: to manage the Delta's water and environmental resources and the water resources of the state over the long term; to protect and enhance the unique cultural, recreational, and agricultural values of the California Delta as an evolving place; to restore the Delta ecosystem, including its fisheries and wildlife, as the heart of a healthy estuary and wetland ecosystem; to promote statewide water conservation, water use efficiency, and sustainable water use; to improve water quality to protect human health and the environment consistent with achieving water quality objectives in the Delta; to improve the water conveyance system and expand statewide water storage; to reduce risks to people, property, and state interests in the Delta by effective emergency preparedness, appropriate land uses, and investments in flood protection; to establish a new governance structure with the authority, responsibility, accountability, scientific support, and adequate and secure funding to achieve these objectives.

### **Preparation of the Plan**

In accordance with CEQA, an EIR is required to describe the proposed project and a range of reasonable alternatives that would feasibly attain the objectives of the project and avoid or lessen any of the significant effects of the project. The EIR must also evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives needed. The range of alternatives in the Plan EIR will be developed to meet the purpose and need of the proposed project and address one or more significant issues related to the proposed project. Within the NOP there are examples of

concepts for implementation strategies that could be considered in the development of alternatives. Information collected during the scoping process will be used to identify and specifically define a wide range of these strategies, compare the strategies to determine conflicts and opportunities, and compile the strategies into alternatives that address all of the goals and policy objectives of the Act.

The EIR will: (a) be based on the best available scientific information and the independent science advice provided by the Delta Independent Science Board; (b) include quantified or otherwise measurable targets associated with achieving the objectives of the Plan; (c) utilize monitoring, data collection, and analysis of actions sufficient to determine progress toward meeting the quantified targets; (d) describe the methods by which the council shall measure progress toward achieving the coequal goals; (e) integration of scientific and monitoring results into ongoing Delta water management; and, (f) include a science-based, transparent, and formal adaptive management strategy for ongoing ecosystem restoration and water management decisions.

The planning areas considered in the Plan EIR are defined by the purposes and uses of the Plan. The primary planning area is defined as the statutory Delta and Suisun Marsh. The secondary planning area is defined by tributaries to the Delta watershed, and areas that use water from the Delta watershed.

### **Potential Environmental Effects of the Purposed Project and Potential Alternatives**

The EIR will identify the significant effects of the proposed project and the alternatives in accordance with CEQA. Mitigation measures or approaches to future mitigation programs will be described to reduce adverse impacts or potentially adverse impacts to a level of less than significant. The Plan EIR will be a programmatic EIR due to the broad nature of the strategies that will be considered for the Plan. This approach will result in recommendations or requirements for environmental documentation to be completed for future covered actions in order to be consistent with the Plan. The EIR will review alternatives due to effects on resources identified in the CEQA guidelines. These resources include: agriculture, water quality, biological, chemical, cultural, economic, land use, recreational, etc.

The EIR will be incorporated into the DRAFT Delta Plan by June, 2011.

### **Scoping Process**

Public Scoping meetings will take place throughout California through the month of January. Meetings will occur at:

**January 20, 2011** 6 - 8:30 pm, Concord Senior Center, 2727 Parkside Circle, **Concord**, CA 94519

**January 24, 2011** 9 am - 12 pm, Resources Building Auditorium, 1416 9th Street, **Sacramento**, CA 95814

**January 24, 2011** 6:30 - 9:30 pm, Clarksburg Middle School Auditorium, 52870 Netherlands Road **Clarksburg**, CA 95612

**January 25, 2011** 6 - 8:30 pm San Joaquin County Robert J. Cabral Agricultural Center, Assembly Rooms 2 and 3, 2101 East Earhart Avenue, **Stockton**, CA 95206

More information and copies of the NOP are available at <http://deltacouncil.ca.gov/>